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ABSTRACT

The climate between police and schools has changed from an adversarial one in the 1960s and 1970s to one in which both sides recognize the many advantages to be gained through cooperation. The criminal justice system is made up of three elements: police, courts, and corrections. Tempering the criminal justice system are the community norms which are reflected in the prosecution patterns of the local courts. When youth commit crimes in the schools, the criminal justice system usually becomes involved. The success of this involvement can vary widely. With effective communication among all members of the criminal justice and education systems involving communication that recognizes the need to respect each other as partners with different clients and different needs, the cycle of frustration and distrust is likely to be broken. Criminal justice personnel, police, and educators need to come to an agreement regarding the roles and responsibilities of each agency. Procedures for intervention by the police in schools should be established. Planning meetings should be held which focus on the following topics: (1) scope of information to be collected and who is to collect it; (2) common definitions of offenses; (3) frequency of review of information; (4) examination of crime data; and (5) logistical issues, including liaison, authority, training, assignment, investigations, arrest, and records. (ABL)

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INTERFACE: SCHOOLS AND POLICE COOPERATION

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INTERFACE: SCHOOLS AND POLICE COOPERATION

Had this article been written five years ago, the title would probably have been, Police/School Relations, or I'm an Educator, Not a Cop, or When to Call the Police to the School. In the past, the problem had been that the schools and the police often viewed themselves as adversaries rather than as partners in the battle to reduce and control crime and violence in schools. While such adversarial relationships were not desirable, they were not without some foundation. Beginning in the 1960s and carried into the 1970s, a general national opinion developed -- a general mood -- that while educators were soft on crime, police were, for the most part, poorly trained sadists who were more interested in "busting heads" than in assisting a school principal plan for and engage in crime prevention. Fortunately for both sides, this climate has now changed; both police and school officials recognize the many advantages gained through cooperation.

To more fully understand this partnership, we should say a word or two about the criminal justice system and how the police and schools play key roles in making this system work for the good of the community.

The criminal justice system is made up of three elements; police, courts, and corrections. Tempering the criminal justice system -- and varying to a certain degree around the country -- are the community norms, the values of the community that are reflected in the prosecution patterns of the local courts. When youth commit crimes in schools, the criminal justice system usually becomes involved. The success or failure of that involvement can vary widely, as you can see from the following two hypothetical examples.

Scenario #1. A juvenile, male student comes to school with a loaded .38 caliber revolver and, during the lunch period, commits an armed robbery of the cafeteria manager. In the course of the robbery, the armed student shoots another student and flees the school grounds.

Comments: There should be no question in anyone's mind that this incident is a police matter. The primary role for the school will be to assist the police in any manner possible to facilitate the arrest of the juvenile offender. The police will investigate the incident, taking written statements from the witnesses, the complainant, and anyone else who has first-hand knowledge. The police will want the identity of the student, including home address and other relevant information. Once the juvenile is arrested, the procedures required to bring him before the Juvenile Court will be executed. The Prosecutor's Office will then take over the case and bring this matter to trial. School personnel will be required to testify, as will the investigating officer. The youth would be found "involved" and remanded to a Juvenile Detention Center for a period of time. The system works; all parties play their respective parts, and the outcome is the successful prosecution of the guilty party.

Scenario #2. On Monday morning, a patrol car pulls up to the front of the school. An officer gets out, reaches back into the car, and picks up his baton (nightstick); placing it in its holder, he heads for the front door of the school. The officer, without clearing his visit with the office, proceeds to the cafeteria and leads out a male student in handcuffs. Other students are in the area, and friends of the student under arrest begin to get involved in the situation. Some loud comments are made by other students, and the arrested student yells, "Get me away from this pig." At that moment, the officer pulls his baton from his holder and yells at the students to get back or, "Someone is going to get hurt." Everyone starts shouting and yelling at once, and several students make a move toward the police officer, who true to his word, hits them with his baton. All hell breaks loose. The officer is knocked to the floor, students jump on him, and someone manages to pull the officer's revolver from his holster and run away with it. The administrators and teachers are able to gain control over the melee.

Students are sent to their classes and the administrators are left with a disheveled and angry police officer, a handcuffed student with an apparent broken arm, two students with cuts on their heads from the baton, a stolen police revolver somewhere in the school, and a whole lot of upset students and teachers. During the ensuing days, fingers of accusations are pointed in all directions. The police department has made public statements that the school authorities failed to support them by not controlling the students; the Prosecutor's office has made statements that the schools are soft on discipline; parents are claiming that the schools are out of control; students are angry with admimistrators for allowing the police to come into the schools; the teachers are threatening a walkout because their contracts had been violated when -- after the incident -- they were required to take hall duty during their planning period; the Superintendent is no longer available; and no one yet knows exactly what happened.

Comments: We could spend hours discussing this case; however, neither time nor space permit such a lengthy discussion. There is little question that the criminal justice system could have performed with more tact and effectiveness. The values of the community, expressed through officials of the school system, were not fully communicated because the board of education had not previously established with the police department the wide-ranging written policies and procedures governing their respective roles. Had such procedures been in place, they doubtless would have included guidelines for removing students from schools. The law enforcement agency performed with some uncertainty because, even though they had a legal right to effect an arrest, they did not involve the school in the process and did not understand the school's expectations. The judicial branch became compromised because, instead of remaining silent and

facilitating the gathering of all of the facts, the Prosecutor's office made derogatory statements regarding their opinion of the school's posture on discipline.

In all probability, this incident would never have occurred had there been adequate preplanning. School systems that provide their principals and other key staff with official written polices to cover such occurrences give these staff valuable and comforting tools to use in just such awkward situations. Similarly, police departments who take the time to instruct their officers in certain mandatory procedures when handling a school situation will probably find themselves less frequently ensnarled in melees such as the one described. For their part, the judicial system that considers the pressures and needs of the education community is likely to attain a very satisfactory working relationship with the education community -- a relationship that may well mean less work for the courts.

With <u>effective communication</u> between all members of the criminal justice and education systems -- communication that recognizes the need to respect each other as partners with different clients and different needs -- the "system" is likely to break the cycle of frustration and mutual distrust that seems to have been the byword for decades.

Educators are accustomed to taking the lead. If in your school district effective communication has not taken place between police, the Prosecutor's office and the school district, perhaps it is time to initiate the process. Call a meeting of the key players. Come to an agreement about the roles and responsibilities for each agency. Establish procedures governing the intervention of the police in the schools and how and by whom the request for such intervention shall be made. Reach an agreement with the Prosecutor's office and with the Juvenile Court Judge about the type of cases they want referred to them. Once all parties have agreed to a procedure, reduce it to writing; have the chiefs of all affected agencies sign the document. This document becomes a Memorandum of Understanding. Then, and only then, will an equal partnership exist. With such a partnership will come the assurance that the criminal justice system will work in concert with community standards for the benefit of youth and adults alike.

AREAS OF INQUIRY BETWEEN SCHOOL AND POLICE AUTHORITIES.

Crime prevention planning between education and law enforcement professionals can often be addressed through discussions leading to formal or informal agreements in a number of areas. Three areas we have selected to highlight are: 1) Initial planning meetings between school and police personnel; 2) Periodic joint reviews of information; 3) Basic logistical issues to consider when developing a cooperative relationship.

Key Topics for Joint Review

1. Initial planning meeting between school and police personnel.

- What is the scope of information that could be collected cooperatively between schools and law enforcement?
- What are the common definitions of offenses, including sub-categories, that describe victims, offenders, intensity, and so forth?
- Is there a schedule for periodic comparison of geographic distribution and pattern of crimes?
- Does either school or police officials see value in using pin-maps or other geographic display systems capable of showing types of crimes occurring in schools and their surrounding communities?
- Who are the individuals responsible for compiling and sharing information?
- What are the perceptions about crime occurring on campus among the various actors -- educators and police?

2. Periodic joint review of information.

- What is the frequency and proportion of crimes in schools in relation to the same crime-types in the community?
- Can the method of operation and suspect characteristics of each type of crime be determined?
- What is the specific location, time of day, and day of week of each type of crime?
- Can motives and special characteristics of each type of crime be determined?

- What is the nature and type of injuries most often suffered by victims.

3. Basic logistical issues to consider when developing a cooperative relationship.

- LIAISON

  + Which district and which police employee is responsible for negotiating logistical agreements between between their agencies?
  + Who from the police and from the schools will be responsible for resolving problems originating at the local school?
  + How frequently shall liaison meetings occur?
  + Who in the school district will know of the contents of this agreement?

- AUTHORITY

  + Are there any times when the principal would not be considered in charge of the school?
  + What police powers of arrest may be decreased in the school?
  + How can police officers be removed from the school if they are not performing adequately?
  + Who decides whether more police officers are needed?
  + Are officers in school considered to be "on-duty" or "off-duty"?
  + What is the relationship between school district security personnel and police officers?
  + Are the roles and levels of authority for officers explained to staff and students?

- TRAINING

  + What prior experience should be required for these officers?
  + Will special training be associated with this assignment?

- ASSIGNMENT

  + How many officers will be assigned within the district?
  + What will be their hours of service?
  + What criteria will determine where they will serve?
  + What will be their pay (if the school district is paying)?
  + What will be their dress -- uniform or plain clothes?
  + Will officers be carrying weapons: if so, what caliber?
  + Can the school participate in officer selection?

- INVESTIGATIONS

  + Who initiates investigations?
  + Who is responsible for followup?
  + Who presses charges?
  + What investigative standard is to be used -- "probable cause" or "reasonable suspicion"?
  + Will police be allowed to investigate violations of school rules?

- ARREST

  + What types of crimes most concern police, local educators, and students?
  + What expectation does each group have about the arrest and prosecution process?
  + Can a principal insist that a law officer arrest a student?
  + Can police decline to arrest a student seen committing a crime?
  + What procedures will the officer use to take a student into custody and to transport him/her to the police station?

- RECORDS

  + Who is maintaining the "chain of custody" of contraband?
  + May the police have access to school records?
  + May educators have access to police files?
  + Will the school create incident reports of its own?
  + Who will be responsible for keeping the school's incident reports?
  + Will the information collected in the incident reports be used in the development of subsequent policies?